

# *Sex Offenders Near Schools*

## *A Review of the Sex Offender Database*



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## **Introduction**

On June 23, 2006 former Governor Pataki signed legislation expanding the state's publicly available sex offender database to include a larger group of registered sex offenders than ever before. The new site, accessible at [http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/nsor/search\\_index.htm](http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/nsor/search_index.htm), went live on July 11<sup>th</sup>, and allows concerned parents, teacher and neighbors to search by name, borough and zip code. The office of Rep. Anthony Weiner conducted the first-ever analysis of all the available data.

## **Background on the Sex Offender Database**

In New York, sex offenders have had to register with the Division of Criminal Justice Services since January 21, 1996. Any sex offender who was on probation or parole on that date, in prison on that date, or was convicted of a crime since then must provide the state with their address and update it every time he/she moves. Not registering is a Class-A misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in prison, and a second offense is a Class-D felony.

When a sex offender is released from prison, he or she has a hearing before the sentencing court and is assigned a risk level from 1 to 3 based upon a number of factors including the crime he/she committed, whether the crime included physical injury, the age of the victim, whether the crime consisted of repeated acts, the sex offender's criminal history and whether the offender is being released into a supervised environment, like a halfway house.

Risk Level 1 sex offenders must register for 20 years after their release, whereas Risk Level 2 and Risk Level 3 offenders must register for life. While all sex offenders must register with the state, and the state sends the residency information to local law enforcement agencies for all offenders, not all offenders are included on the publicly available sex offender database. Before June 2006, only Risk Level 3 offenders, the most dangerous criminals who had committed the most heinous crimes, were included. Under the new state law, however, Risk Level 2 offenders are now also included. No information is available to the public on the internet about Risk Level 1 offenders who committed less "dangerous" crimes like "promoting a sexual performance by a child" and "forcible touching."

In order to track offenders, the Division of Criminal Justice Services sends a non-forwardable letter to the home of every Level 1 and 2 sex offender once a year. If the offender doesn't respond confirming their address within 21 days, they are referred to police to investigate. Level 3 offenders are required to report to NYPD's Sex Offender Monitoring Unit every 90 days with a document proving their address, like a utility bill. The SOMU is located on 40<sup>th</sup> St. between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues in Manhattan.

## **Sex Offender Concentration by Borough**

The state database includes 2,114 sex offenders who list their residence as within the five boroughs. Among the boroughs Brooklyn has the most sex offenders, while the Bronx has the highest ratio of both total residents to sex offenders and of residents under 18 years old to sex offenders.

Borough	Sex Offenders	People	People per offender	Kids	Kids per offender
Bronx	500	1,368,159	<b>2,736</b>	269,251	<b>539</b>
Brooklyn	671	2,492,952	<b>3,715</b>	395,770	<b>590</b>
Staten Island	95	470,096	<b>4,948</b>	112,204	<b>1,181</b>
Manhattan	420	1,595,127	<b>3,798</b>	498,212	<b>1,186</b>
Queens	428	2,268,755	<b>5,301</b>	649,073	<b>1,517</b>
NYC	2,114	8,195,089	<b>3,877</b>	1,924,510	<b>910</b>

Sources: US Census Bureau, New York Division of Criminal Justice Services

## Sex Offender Concentration Near Schools

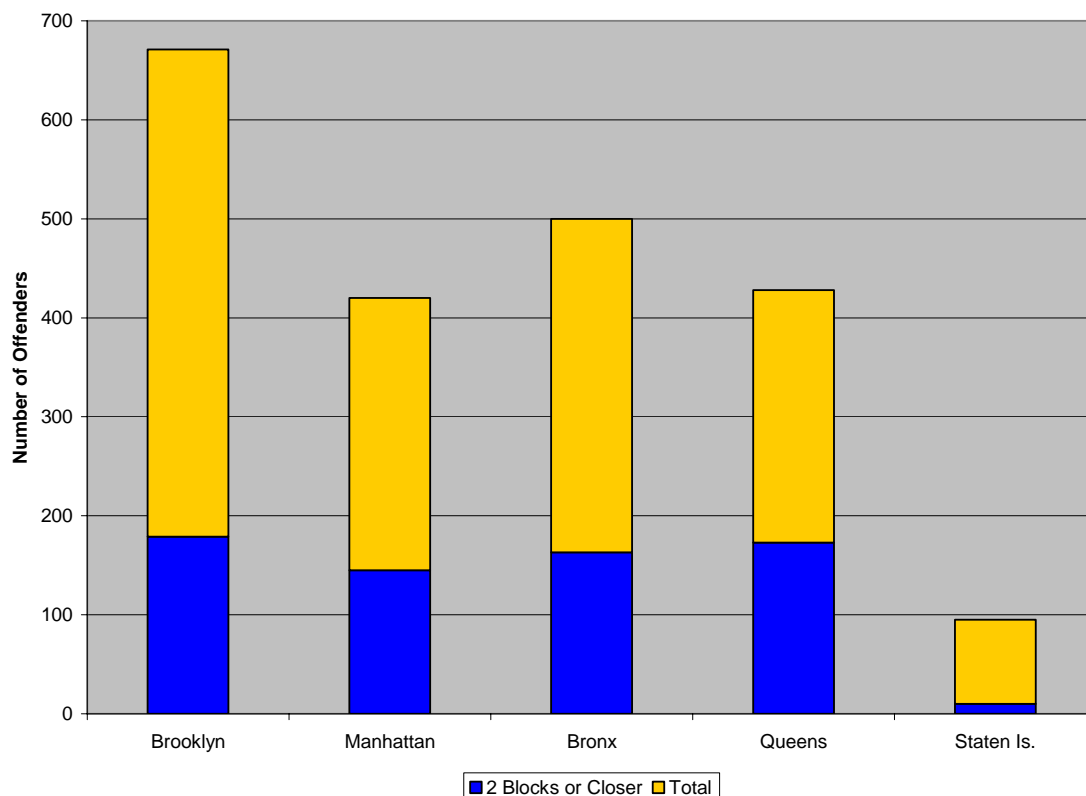
A December 1997 study published in the journal “Law and Human Behavior” found that over a 25 year period after being released from prison, 52% of child molesters commit another sex offense, and 39% of rapists commit another sex offense (Prentky, Lee, Knight, and Cerce).

85% of New York City’s worst sex offenders live within five blocks of schools, including 90% of offenders in Brooklyn, 90% of offenders in Manhattan, and 89% of offenders in the Bronx. Even worse, 32% of these sex offenders live just two blocks or less from a school. The study includes public, private and parochial elementary, junior high and high schools.

	Number of Offenders	Total Offenders 2 blocks or less from School	Percent Offenders 2 blocks or less from a School
Queens	428	173	40%
Manhattan	420	145	35%
Bronx	500	163	33%
Brooklyn	671	179	27%
Staten Island	95	10	11%
<b>NYC</b>	<b>2114</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>32%</b>

Sources: New York Division of Criminal Justice Services, Library of Congress Cartography Program

### Sex Offenders Too Close to Schools



## **Schools at Risk**

Many New York City schools have multiple sex offenders just minutes away from where children learn and play. Among the examples of the problem are the following offenders near the schoolyard:

JEFFREY NORWOOD

473 Kosciusko St., Brooklyn

**Sexually Violent Offender**

Victim: 10 year-old female

Conviction: 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Rape in 1994

Sentence: 4 to 8 years

Now living 229 feet from PS 81



ELVIDO CHEVALIER

1522 Vyse Avenue, Bronx

**Sexually Violent Offender**

Victim: 12 year-old female

Conviction: Unspecified Felony Sex Offense in 2002

Sentence: 1 day to 5 years

Now living 118 feet from PS50



MELVIN DAWSON

31 West 124<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan

**Sexually Violent Offender**

Victim: 6 year-old female

Conviction: 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Sexual Abuse in 2002

Sentence: 6 months and 10 years probation

Now living 482 feet from Rice High School



LEE COYNE

115-07 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, South Ozone Park, Queens

**Sexually Violent Offender**

Victim: 9 year-old male

Conviction: 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Sexual Conduct Against Child in 1998

Sentence: 3 to 6 years

Now living 138 feet from Our Lady of Perpetual Help School



VINCENT PALAGONIA

1274 Hylan Boulevard, Staten Island

**Sexually Violent Offender**

Victims: Females, 8 and 16 years old

Conviction: 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Sexual Abuse and 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Rape in 1997

Sentence: 3 to 6 years

Now living 249 feet from Academy of St. Dorothy



*Note: All addresses confirmed as current by NYPD's Sex Offender Monitoring Unit*

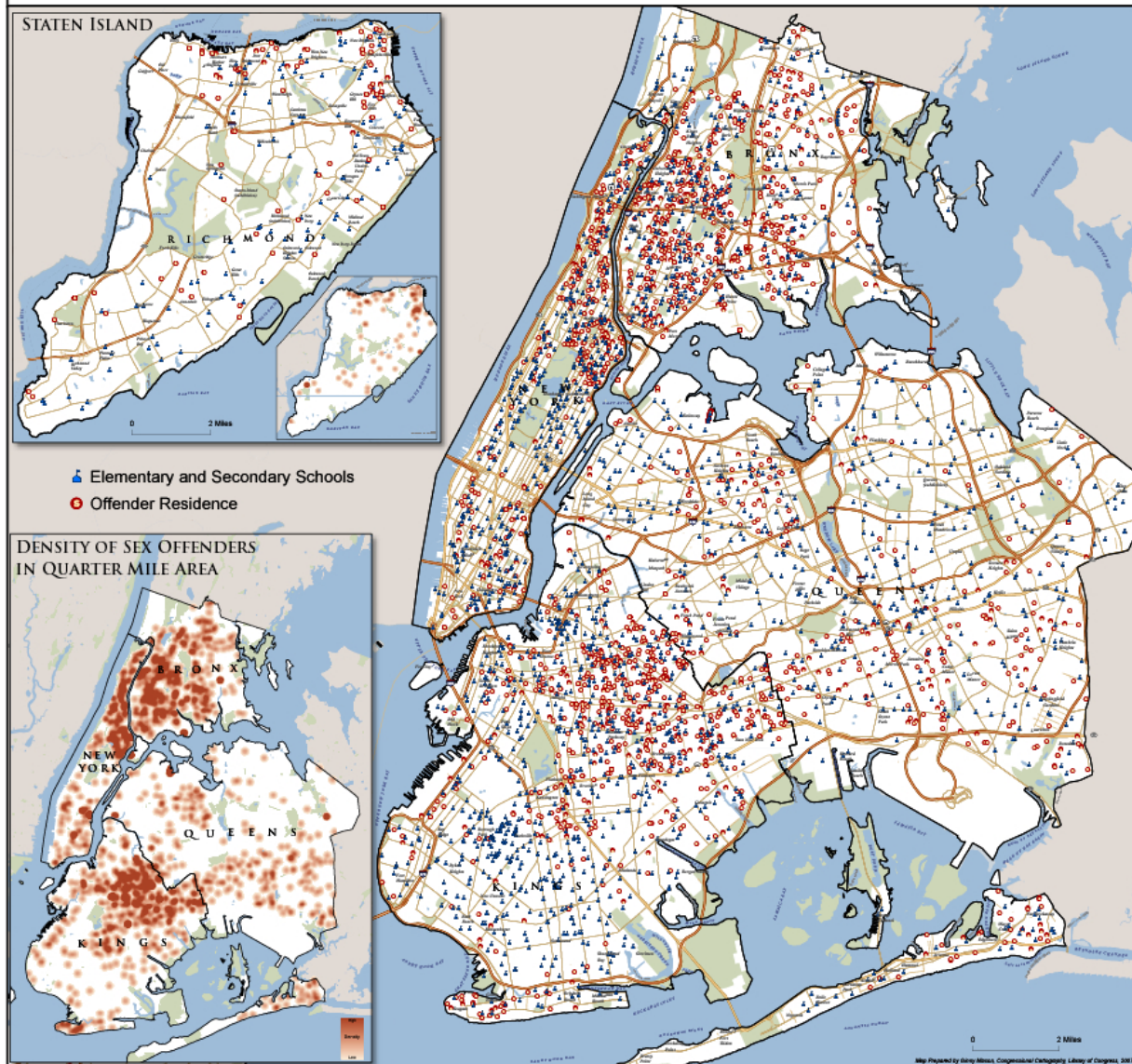
## Neighborhoods at Risk

Some neighborhoods disproportionately house sex offenders after they are released from prison. Many neighborhoods not only house a large number of sex offenders, but also have a large number near neighborhood schools.

Rank	ZIP Code	Neighborhood	Borough	Number of Offenders	Number 2 Blocks or Closer	Percent 2 Blocks or Closer
1	10456	Morrisania	Bronx	52	28	53.8%
2	10457	Tremont	Bronx	46	24	52.2%
3	11221	Bushwick	Brooklyn	72	22	30.6%
4	10029	Hell Gate/East Harlem	Manhattan	32	20	62.5%
5	11207	East New York	Brooklyn	63	18	28.6%
6	10032	Washington Heights	Manhattan	29	17	58.6%
7	11212	Brownsville	Brooklyn	43	16	37.2%
T-8	11213	Crown Heights	Brooklyn	37	14	37.8%
T-8	10468	Highbridge	Bronx	23	14	60.9%
T-10	10460	West Farm	Bronx	35	13	37.1%
T-10	10453	Hunts Point	Bronx	30	13	43.3%
T-12	11233	Stuyvesant	Brooklyn	52	12	23.1%
T-12	10031	Hamilton Grange/Harlem	Manhattan	22	12	54.5%
T-12	10455	Fordham- Little Italy	Bronx	19	12	63.2%
15	10027	Manhattanville/Morningside Hgts.	Manhattan	19	11	57.9%
T-16	11206	Metropolitan	Brooklyn	25	9	36.0%
T-16	11224	Coney Island	Brooklyn	24	9	37.5%
T-17	10467	Allerton	Bronx	38	7	18.4%
T-17	10451	Einstein	Bronx	17	7	41.2%
T-17	10458	Mount Carmel	Bronx	16	7	43.8%
T-17	11238	Adelphi	Brooklyn	14	7	50.0%
T-17	10025	Cathedral / Upper West Side	Manhattan	12	7	58.3%

Cartographers at the Library of Congress have plotted the location of every school and every sex offender in New York City on a map. Every sex offender is represented by a red dot, every school is a blue building on the following page.

## SEX OFFENDERS LIVING CLOSE TO NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS



### Recommendations

1. **Establish Federal Grant Program for Sex Offender Monitoring:** Rep. Weiner will introduce legislation creating a federal grant program to fund sex offender surveillance. Under the bill, \$100 million would be available each year for local law enforcement agencies across the country. And to incentivize local coordination, more funds will go to states that share resources and coordinate tracking efforts. This, for example, would allow a joint New Jersey/New York system to track a sex offender from New Jersey who drives into the city and commits a sex crime.
2. **Track Sex Offenders within 2 Blocks of Schools via GPS:** Sex Offenders who chose to live within 2 blocks of New York City schools would be required to wear a satellite tracking device, such as an ankle bracelet, so their movements can be monitored, recorded and archived. Under the technology, school properties would be designated as off limits “exclusion zones” and an immediate alert could be sent to the NYPD if a sex offender encroaches on schools grounds. Data can also be stored and, as an example, used as evidence at a trial. The New York state program would be modeled after a Massachusetts pilot program implemented in 2004 that uses active GPS monitoring devices to track

all Level 3 registered sex offenders on parole or probation. The technology costs \$10 per person per day. If the technology were used for all the registered sex offenders living within 2 blocks of a New York City School, it would cost \$2.4 million a year. The state of Wisconsin launched a program last year to place the state's 200 most dangerous sex offenders released from correctional facilities on GPS monitoring.

3. **Create National Task Force for Reducing Sex Offenses:** Rep. Weiner will introduce federal legislation directing the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to form a joint task force for the purpose of reducing sex offenses nationwide. Within 1 year, the task force will be required to report to Congress on best practices for housing sex offenders, successful integration and psychiatric treatment in prison to reduce the risk of repeat offenses.
4. **Expand Search Capabilities of Sex Offender Database:** New York State only allows citizens to search by three very basic fields: zip code, name and county. Rep. Weiner proposes adding more search options to allow, for instance, parents to search for sex offenders surrounding a specific address, such as their child's school. And the database should also incorporate mapping technology that's widely available in cyberspace.
5. **Crack Down on Sex Offenders who Violate Registration Laws:** The largest problem with sex offender registries is that people move and violate the law by not registering a new address when they move. The NYPD's Sex Offender Monitoring Unit has investigators assigned to track down sex offenders who don't update their addresses as required by law, but there is no way to account for sex offenders who move upstate or for upstate sex offenders who move to the City without registering their new address. Following the lead of a successful Wisconsin program known as the Sex Offender Apprehension and Felony Enforcement (SAFE) Initiative, Rep. Weiner proposes deploying teams of retired criminal investigators to locate and apprehend violators statewide.
6. **Require Registration of MySpace Accounts and Other Online Identities:** Only requiring disclosure of a sex offender's physical address ignores the growing role of the Internet as tool for child predators. Rep. Weiner is an original co-sponsor of federal legislation that will require sex offenders to register their MySpace accounts, Instant Messenger screen names and email addresses with law enforcement agencies. News Corp, which owns MySpace, requested the legislation, which will be introduced next week. It is sponsored by Congressman Earl Pomeroy, whose district was home to Dru Sjodin, a University of North Dakota student who was kidnapped, raped and murdered in 2003 by a registered sex offender from Minnesota. The Senate companion legislation will be sponsored by Senators John McCain and Charles E. Schumer.